This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-18 (canceled)

19. (currently amended): A method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of a food item comprising:

~~providing identity data identifying the food item;~~

reading with a hand-held data collector a label on the food item, the label having identity data identifying the food item;

transmitting the identity data to the computer;

measuring a first temperature value of the food item with a temperature measuring device in electrical communication with the hand-held data collector;

transmitting the first temperature value of the food item to a computer from the hand-held data collector; and

storing at the computer the first temperature value of the food item in association with the identity data, so that a record of the temperature of the food item is maintained.

20. (canceled)

21. (canceled)

22. (currently amended): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim ~~21~~ 19 further comprising transmitting the first temperature value from the hand-held data collector to the computer.

23. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 22 further comprising:

transmitting temperature related data for the food item from the computer to the hand-held data collector; and

2

printing a label for the food item using a printer in electrical communications with the hand-held data collector, the label containing information relating to the temperature related data.

24. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 19 wherein providing identity data further comprises providing with the computer a tracking number identifying the food item.

25. (canceled)

26. (currently amended): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 25 19 further comprising transmitting an identity of the temperature measuring device to the computer.

27. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 19 further comprising:

measuring a plurality of temperature values of the food item at different times with the temperature measuring device;

transmitting the plurality of temperature values of the food item to the computer; and

storing at the computer the plurality of temperature values of the food item in association with the identity data, so that a time record of the plurality of temperature values of the food item over time is maintained.

28. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 19 further comprising:

detecting a nonconformance of the first temperature value of the food item with respect to specified temperature values for the food item; and

providing an alert signal in response to detecting the nonconformance of the first temperature value.

29. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 19 further comprising:

    measuring the first temperature value at a first location;

    transmitting an identity of the first location to the computer;

    measuring a second temperature value representing a temperature of the food item at a second location;

    transmitting the second temperature value and an identity of the second location to the computer; and

    storing at the computer the second temperature value and identities of the respective first and second locations in association with the identity data, so that a record of the temperature of the food item at different locations is maintained.

30. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 19 further comprising:

    measuring a second temperature value representing a temperature of the food item;

    transmitting the second temperature value to the computer; and

    storing at the computer the second temperature value in association with the identity data, so that a record of the temperature of the food item over time is maintained.

31. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 30 further comprising measuring the first and the second temperature values at different times.

32. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 31 further comprising measuring the first and the second temperature values at different times at one food processing station.

33. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 31 further comprising measuring the first and the second temperature values at respective first and second food processing stations.

34. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 31 further comprising:

detecting a nonconformance of each of the first and the second temperature values of the food item with respect to specified temperature values for the food item; and

providing an alert signal in response to detecting a nonconformance of one of the first and the second temperature values.

35. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking temperatures of claim 31 further comprising:

measuring a plurality of first temperature values representing temperatures of the food item at a first food processing station;

transmitting the plurality of first temperature values to a computer;

measuring a plurality of second temperature values representing temperatures of the food item at a second food processing station;

transmitting the plurality of second temperature values to a computer; and

storing at the computer the plurality of the first and second temperature values in association with the identity data, so that over time a record of the temperature of the food item is maintained.

36. (currently amended): A method of monitoring and tracking shelf life for a food item comprising:

providing identity data identifying a food item;

identifying a first location of the food item; and

automatically determining a shelf life for the food item as a function of the identity of the first location;

identifying another location to which the food item is moved; and

automatically determining and storing a new shelf life for the food item as a function of the first and other locations.

37. (canceled)

5

38. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 36 further comprising updating a table providing shelf-life values as a function of different food items and locations.

39. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 38 further comprising automatically determining a first date on which the food item is placed at the first location.

40. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 39 further comprising automatically generating an expiration date for a food item as a function of a shelf-life value and the first date.

41. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 36 further comprising:

    determining a first date on which the food item is placed at the first location; and
    automatically determining a first expiration date for the food item as a function of the identity of shelf life at the first location and the first date.

42. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 41 further comprising:

    identifying a second location to which the food item is moved;
    automatically determining a shelf life for the food item as a function of the identity of the second location;
    determining a second date on which the food item is placed at the second location; and
    automatically determining a new expiration date for the food item as a function of the shelf lives at the first and second locations and the first and second dates.

43. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 42 further comprising iterating steps in the process of claim 42 each time the food item is moved.

44. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf life of claim 41 further comprising automatically providing an alert in response to the new expiration date exceeding a maximum expiration date for the food item.

45. (previously presented): A method of monitoring and tracking shelf lives for food items comprising:

(a) receiving and storing identity data identifying food items;

(b) determining and storing a first date on which each of the food items is placed at a first location;

(c) automatically determining and storing

(1) a first shelf life for each of the food items as a function of the first location and

(2) a first expiration date for each of the food items as a function of the first shelf life and the first date;

(d) receiving and storing data identifying a second location to which one of the food items is moved;

(e) determining and storing a second date on which the one of the food items is placed at the second location; and

(f) automatically determining and storing

(1) a second shelf life for the one of the food items as a function of the second location and

(2) a new expiration date for the one of the food items as a function of the first and second shelf lives and the first and second dates.

46. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf lives of claim 45 further comprising iterating steps (e) and (f) each time one of the food items is moved to a new location.

47. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf lives of claim 45 further comprising automatically providing an alert in response to the new expiration date exceeding a maximum expiration date for the one of the plurality of food items.

7

48. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf lives of claim 45 further comprising:

automatically calculating expiration dates for all of the food items having first identity data in response for a request to use a food item having the first identity data;

automatically identifying a food item having a closest expiration date; and

automatically providing an output identifying a location of the food item having the closest expiration date.

49. (previously presented): The method of monitoring and tracking shelf lives of claim 48 further comprising:

receiving input data corresponding to the food item having the closest expiration date; and

automatically providing an output signal in response to receiving the input data corresponding to the food item having the closest expiration date.

50. (original): A method of monitoring and tracking a food lot number for a food item comprising:

providing and storing in a monitoring and tracking system identity data identifying food items and food lot numbers associated with respective ones of the food items, each food lot number identifying a specific lot from which the food item was made by a particular manufacturer; and

generating a report using the monitoring and tracking system to identify the food items associated with a lot number input by a user.

51. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking a food lot number of claim 50 further comprising:

providing and storing a plurality of location codes representing respective locations at which each of the food items has been located in food handling and preparation processes; and

automatically generating a report using the monitoring and tracking system to identify locations of the food items associated with a lot number input by a user.

52. (original): The method of monitoring and tracking a food lot number of claim 50 further comprising:

providing and storing prepared food codes representing foods prepared using the food items; and

automatically generating a report using the monitoring and tracking system to identify prepared foods using food items associated with a lot number input by a user.